

Dr Challoner's High School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110495
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	397456
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead inspector	Bill Stoneham

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,051
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lyn Williams
Headteacher	Ian Cooksey
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Cokes Lane Little Chalfont Amersham Buckinghamshire HP7 9QB
Telephone number	01494 763296
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Email address	office@challonershigh.com

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham	Additional inspector
Richard Butler	Additional inspector
Marion Hobbs	Additional inspector
Lynn Lowery	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Thirty-four lessons were observed, featuring 34 different teachers. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, students, the headteacher, and senior and middle managers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at students' work. In addition, questionnaire responses from 146 parents and carers, 69 staff and 158 students were analysed and their views taken into account.

Information about the school

Dr Challoner's High School is a larger-than-average selective school for girls. About three quarters of girls are White British, with a small number of Indian and other ethnic groups; a tenth speak English as an additional language, though all are fluent in English. The school is heavily oversubscribed and the student population is stable. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is very low, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is far lower than usual. The school meets the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

The school has recently converted to academy status. At the time of the inspection, no lessons could be observed in Years 11, 12 or 13 because all students had started their GCSE, AS and A Level study leave. The current headteacher commenced his position in September 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. Outstanding education is rooted in a well-structured curriculum that amply meets needs. Students further benefit from numerous opportunities to excel in varied extra-curricular activities and to exercise responsibility and leadership.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students make outstanding progress gaining very strong examination results because the well-planned curriculum meets their needs so well. Teaching is outstanding and demanding, as are leadership and management. Students thrive in the challenging, but highly supportive, environment.
- Achievement is outstanding. All groups, including those from minority ethnic groups, disabled students and those with special educational needs, and the very small number entitled to free school meals, make rapid progress in their learning. Well-above-average attendance contributes to this level of progress.
- Teaching is outstanding. Stimulating lessons are characterised by pace, challenge and high expectations. Students respond with great interest and enthusiasm. Literacy and numeracy are promoted most effectively and the students' skills in writing, giving oral presentations and analysing data are hugely impressive. At a whole-school level, assessment data are used well to set individual targets but, in some lessons, data are not used with sufficient consistency to inform lesson planning.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students' excellent attitudes make a significant contribution to their learning in a very happy, safe and harmonious environment.
- The school is led by an outstanding headteacher. He receives outstanding support from excellent senior and middle leaders, and a highly committed and skilful team of staff. Governance is similarly outstanding and the knowledgeable governing body offers unstinting support. Self-evaluation is accurate; the school knows its strengths and continually strives to improve further through a robust staff performance system. The well-planned, vibrant curriculum ensures considerable scope for the promotion of the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2013, further increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring staff use the assessment data available to aid lesson planning so that students are consistently set individual learning targets in lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

On entry, levels of attainment are well above average. The achievement of all groups, including sixth formers, disabled students or those with special educational needs, and those from minority ethnic groups, is outstanding. Students successfully build on their strong starting points so that standards by the end of Years 11 and 13 are high.

The school's extensive monitoring and tracking systems, and evidence from classroom observations, confirm that standards are high across all subjects. All students are learning exceptionally well. They acquire knowledge quickly and in depth, and they are able to apply a wide range of skills most effectively. The quality of literacy and numeracy work is extremely high. Students are articulate, confident, and their vocabularies are rich and interesting. They read detailed text well and their skills at applying detailed concepts and using subject-specific vocabulary with considerable accuracy is particularly impressive. In an outstanding Year 10 chemistry lesson, students all made rapid progress in their learning. Especially impressive was their skill at analysing complex problems and then explaining their work clearly and by using correct chemical terms with accuracy and confidence. Another Year 10 group in a biology lesson displayed outstanding skills in data analysis. Not only could they describe trends in the data very clearly orally, their written descriptions were detailed, yet succinctly expressed. Their sophisticated use of language enlivened their written commentaries so that they were both accurate and interesting to read.

Outstanding progress was observed in many lessons covering a diverse range of subjects because of teachers' expert subject knowledge. Rapid progress was further fostered by the lively, interesting and enthusiastic approaches adopted, allied to the desire of the students to learn and excel. The rapid progress observed in lessons and evident over time is based on successful partnerships between skilful, knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers and highly motivated students who have a thirst for learning. The quality of work seen in many subjects was simply stunning!

The findings of the inspection team mirror the views expressed by the vast majority of parents and carers. Almost all who responded to the inspection questionnaire were pleased with the progress their daughters are making.

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Quality of teaching

Teaching is outstanding. This includes the sixth form, and the teaching of disabled students and those with special educational needs. During the inspection, none of the lessons observed was less than good, with a high proportion judged outstanding. Lessons are invariably planned well, contributing to the students' outstanding achievement. Teaching is frequently exciting and challenging, and successfully stimulates interest and enjoyment from the students. Rapid progress arises from students being encouraged to delve into their work and explore answers for themselves. In the very best lessons, high-quality learning is fostered through independent and collaborative working. In many lessons, students worked well together and showed excellent skills in self- and peer-assessment. High expectations and challenge are key characteristics of lessons. Students are frequently encouraged to read for themselves for research and pleasure, and written work is varied, challenging and of the highest quality. In some lessons, where teaching is good rather than outstanding, staff do not consistently use the available assessment data to set groups of students different targets for the lesson. Lesson planning is appropriate in all other respects, but this is an aspect where some variability exists.

Full advantage of opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is taken. Teamwork and responsibility are fostered well and in many lessons quite deep spiritual, moral and cultural issues are discussed with maturity. In a GCSE religious education class, students discussed theism and the views of philosophers such as Kant with considerable maturity. Again, their oral skills and the richness of their vocabularies were to the fore. The thoughtfully designed curriculum has a positive impact on teaching, helping to ensure that lessons are engaging and interesting.

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers are happy with the quality of teaching provided. As one commented: 'Both my daughters are performing to a very high standard, encouraged by the quality of teaching they receive.' Many other parents and carers expressed similar sentiments.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are provided with working environments that are safe, secure and well cared for. In inspection questionnaires, students, parents and carers all indicated that the school is safe. Although a small minority of parents, carers and students expressed disquiet about behaviour, evidence shows that behaviour over time is outstanding, including the students' well-above-average attendance. In virtually every lesson observed, students' excellent behaviour contributed significantly to their learning. Students have an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and have a well-developed understanding of the different forms of bullying. Incidents of bullying and harassment, including those based on race, are rare. When they arise, they are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Various schemes are promoted in school whereby older students are encouraged to act as mentors or 'buddies' to younger girls.

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Initiatives such as 'Big sister/Little sister' enable older and younger girls to support each other in subjects and wider extra-curricular interests.

Another aspect of the excellent behaviour is the promotion of responsibility. Students in all years are given scope to seek responsibility and act as leaders. Noticeable initiatives include opportunities for sixth formers to sit on the governing body and for students to be consulted when new staff are appointed. Some students, for example, were consulted as part of the selection process for the new headteacher. Students are involved in other programmes such as anti-bullying campaigns, and they can air their views and opinions through their various councils. Student voice has led to recent changes in canteen food and the routes followed by school buses. Students are proud of their school. Many, and especially some exceedingly impressive and mature sixth formers, are superb ambassadors.

Leadership and management

Though still comparatively new to post, the headteacher provides outstanding leadership and has skilfully built on the strengths he inherited as well as providing a clear vision for the future. He is well supported by his excellent senior team and a superb, keen and committed staff. Morale is high. A high proportion of respondents to the staff inspection questionnaire said they were proud to work at the school.

Self-evaluation is strong. Though standards are high and achievement outstanding, there is a consensus that further improvements can be made. Equality of opportunity is promoted vigorously, especially through the well-planned curriculum, and discrimination is not tolerated. The monitoring and tracking of students' work is thorough and effective. The performance of different groups is closely monitored, ensuring that any gaps in performance are identified and closed. Provision for all students is outstanding, with no significant variations in the achievements of different groups; all, including those in the sixth form, and disabled students and those with special educational needs, are making outstanding progress. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and give no cause for concern. The school site is safe. Appropriate provision, including detailed risk assessments, is made for all activities whether off-site or in the school.

The monitoring of teaching and learning has improved during the current academic year, leading to further improvements. During the inspection, senior staff showed themselves to be adept observers of teaching. The use of assessment data has improved well recently, though a remaining challenge is to ensure that all staff use such information with consistency to inform lesson planning. An effective focus on the professional development of staff is ensuring that the quality of teaching is outstanding. The excellent and experienced governing body know the school very well. Its members give senior leaders strong support. They are fully involved in monitoring progress and holding the school to account. The quality of self-evaluation ensures an excellent capacity for further improvements.

The curriculum is outstanding and contributes significantly to the outstanding

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achievement in all years, including the sixth form. The high quality of extra-curricular provision through music, sport, drama and a variety of clubs most effectively promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Activities such as designing a Buddhist prayer garden, partnership work with a school in Tanzania and visits to places as diverse as Bletchley Park, Glyndebourne and Ypres demonstrate the commitment to extending the students' horizons. Parent and carer satisfaction is extremely high. Most parents and carers say they would recommend this school to others. One parent summarised the views of many: 'My daughter has absolutely loved attending Challoner's and has made exceptional progress.'

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Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



31 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Dr Challoner's High School, Amersham HP7 9QB

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed our recent visit. We enjoyed talking to you and learning about your views. As you told us, yours is an outstanding school, providing a very high level of education. You are privileged to attend such a special school, but your own contribution to its success should not be underestimated. Your enthusiasm, behaviour, high attendance and your general desire to take full advantage of what is offered contribute significantly to the outstanding outcomes.

So many things impressed us. Teaching is outstanding. You are taught to a very high level by a team of accomplished teachers, who are keen for all of you to succeed. In lessons, the work set is challenging, and engages and motivates you. Lessons are frequently outstanding but we have challenged the senior staff and governors to ensure that even more lessons reach this level. When planning lessons, staff should make more use of the assessment data available so that set tasks and challenges can be modified to meet individual needs with more accuracy.

We liked the extent to which you contribute to school life and were impressed by the many opportunities you have to exercise responsibility, including senior students serving on the governing body. The curriculum you are offered also impressed us and we were pleased to learn that so very many of you take full advantage of the extra-curricular activities offered. We understand that music and drama productions are of a very high standard and that some of you play sport at county level or beyond. It was pleasing to hear that you can also participate in sport at a more social level if you so desire.

We would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours. By maintaining and building on the very high standards you have set, you can help your staff secure the improvements we have requested.

Thank you for making our visit enjoyable and memorable.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham
Additional inspector

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